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In a small pot they prepare a fresh sauce of monkey nuts to season it. The family takes its *morning meal* (fihlula); then, if it is the season of tillage, they go to the fields, with hoes on their shoulders, the shihundju (conic baskets) on their heads, and sometimes their babies on their backs. The whole morning they will dig up sweet potatoes, grub up their future plantation, or weed their

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Phot. H. G.

Sylokzini women preparing the evening meal after their return from the fields.

mealies. In the heat of the day they come back in order to prepare the evening meal. Sometimes, if the gardens are far away, or when they are employed in scaring the birds from their sorghum plantation, they remain the whole day in their fields, and cook their evening food there, bringing it back to the village at sunset quite hot (1).

(1) I saw a Rikatha woman coming home under such conditions, carrying her child on her shoulders and the burning monkey-nut sauce in the shihundju on her head. Her foot caught in a rut; she tottered; the pot fell on the baby, which was scalded to death.

462 Many other home duties may oblige the woman to leave the
511 fields at noon; her head still laden with her basket, she may
356 go to the swamps, near by, and dig out a store of black clay
317 (bompfi). She comes back, mixes the clay with the fresh dung
which she has taken from the oxen kraal, and, spreading this
mixture with her hands, smears the floor of the hut. This work
is called *sindja* (Ro) or *kopola* (Dj.). Dust and vermin will
at once disappear under this plaster of black earth, which will dry
in a few hours time. Woe to the woman who has not put enough
dung in this novel kind of cement! The floor will crack. The
clay will shrivel and, when people walk on it, it will crumble into
dust! The work will have to be done all over again two or three
days later. But if the clay is of good quality, it will harden and
last at least a week, the more so as neither wooden shoes nor nailed
boots will spoil it.

462 Another woman will go with her primitive axe in search of
511 dead wood. She makes a bundle which she ties with grasses,
313 strengthening these grasses by entwining them with small
384 twigs (1). On returning to the village, she throws her burden on
to the ground, before the door of her hut, with the exclamation:
"Hu!"

462 Others go to their storehouses, the small huts on poles, where
511 mealies, monkey nuts in their husks, millet and sorghum are kept.
343 They take what they need from these stores (tshaha) by lifting up
252 the roof of the little hut, come back and empty the mealies into the
376 mortar, whilst a friend rubs off the grains from the ears of millet or
shells the monkey nuts. Two or three women seize their pestles
and begin to pound, in measured time, the bottom of their mortars:
Gu-gu-gu-gu. Quite a long way off, on the other side of the copse,
this pestle song can be heard, resembling the noise of the flails
when corn is threshed in the barn. And the busy women stream
with perspiration! This method of crushing the mealies in an erect
position, by a vigorous up and down movement of the pestle in

284 (1) Men, when they fasten a bundle with a string, make a knot (ba fundju) whilst
313 women twist it with a little stick (sulela hi linhi); when a woman ties a knot, the two
ends of the string will be at right angles to the string, whilst when a man makes it, the
ends will be parallel with it. (Mboza).

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the mortar, is a very healthy one and gives the Thonga women a straight and slender figure. In the tribes where the millet is mostly ground between stones, the women who do this work kneeling are shorter and stouter.

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Phot. A. de Meuron.

Shiluvane girls returning from the well.

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Before putting the mealies on the fire, the women go down to the village well, their round pitchers on their heads, to fetch the water they need. In the Ronga country these wells are simple holes dug in the sand, in the centre of the hollows (1). Wells are generally surrounded by thorny branches so as to prevent the cattle from coming to drink and fouling the water. It must be observed that it is not a spring which feeds the well; it is the underground layer of water which has been reached, and which always maintains the same level except in times of drought.

The sun goes down on the horizon. The long shadows of the trees round the village lengthen on the square. Through the leaves, a few rays still reach the fireplaces and traverse the smoke which rises peacefully from the various kitchens. Between

broken pots, or between the pieces of termitine clay which constitute the hearth on which the pots rest, the women place some pieces of dead wood; when these burn away in the centre, they push them further under the pot where the flour is cooking (ba hlanyeta ndjilo). Evening has come. The men have arrived. With a large spoon (nkombe) the lady of the house

(1) In the Transvaal, where there are rivers, water is taken from them, or from wells dug near the spring into which the water leaks through the soil, being more or less filtered by this process.

243 their mealies with the small pimples of their tattooing (tinhleke ta Ba-Ronga). If maize is the most appreciated cereal, it is certainly not the most ancient known to the tribe. Owing to its modernity, no doubt, it is not subject to any taboo. It is sown and harvested without any rite. At Christmas time, when the first cobs are edible, people joyfully feast on the new crop. They cook some of them in the ashes, but they allow the rest to ripen and dry upon the stalks. Although no taboo prevents any owner of a field from eating the first mealies whenever it suits him, Mboza asserts that people who have obtained green mealies before the other inhabitants of the village, do not precede them in the enjoyment of this much appreciated food: "It would cause jealousy amongst them." This reason is perhaps at the bottom of the luma taboo (I, p. 394). Moreover they fear lest they might have to share their good luck with all their friends!

243 Next in importance comes the *mabele*, plur. of *bele*, *dji-ma* (Ro.), *nwahuba* (Dj.), the *millet* or *Kafir corn*. This is the well-known millet which we give to birds in cages, small, round, blackish grains which grow on a stem 3 to 5 feet high, in elongated cylindrical ears. Kafir corn is pounded, or ground, and may be eaten in the form of flour. But its main use is to provide the yeast for the Kafir beer. As already pointed out (I. p. 42) the *mabele* is one of the oldest cereals known to the Thongas. It is the ritual cereal, that used for the "shimhimbi," the dish offered to the confined mother or prepared for the luma ceremony. Its seeds undergo a certain treatment before being sown: the sub-chief blows upon them after having taken a small piece of a certain root in his mouth; this root obtained from a kind of juncus found in the mountains, is supposed to have the power of keeping the ants away from the seeds. He distributes the seeds thus treated amongst his people, and every one mixes some of them with his own supply. Men of the reigning family alone possess this root. Later on, when the time for sowing has come, it is taboo for subjects to precede their chiefs or sub-chiefs in sowing *mabele*. The bones are consulted. Should the "madjuma" fall showing their mouths (see Part VI), it is the answer of the gods. They say: "Yes! this is the proper time! The *mabele* will do well!"

Its first cousin, the *kwakwa* (dji-ma), is of the same shape and size, but, when ripening, becomes quite an orange yellow: it is never eaten uncooked. The pulp surrounding the stones is prepared in a certain way and made into strips (*nhasa*, *yi-tin*), which are hung on the trees to dry or over the fire to be smoked; this is what is called *nfuma*. Once the *nfuma* is dried, it can be pounded and made into a flour much valued when the storehouses are empty, and the new season has not yet begun.

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The *sala* and the *kwakwa* are two species of the genus *Strychnos* (*Strychnos spinosa* and *ungasha*) which furnishes chemists and poisoners with the well-known drug strychnine. Does the fruit contain any proportion of this substance? I do not know. It has never been known to kill any one, although it may be the cause of many intestinal troubles which naturally result when the Natives, having no more maize or sweet potatoes, live on nothing but this particular fruit. Strange to say, the *kwakwa* stones are credited with the power of attracting lightning; the old women say that, when making *nfuma*, these large white stones must never be allowed to lie in a heap in the open air: lightning would surely strike the village were any such imprudence committed. It is a taboo.

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I have already described the *nkanye* (*mu-mi*), (*Sclerocarya caffra*, Kafir plum), which is certainly the most highly valued of all the trees in Thongaland (I. p. 398). The fruit is used primarily and essentially for the brewing of *bukanye*, by pressing the pulp, but the kernels of the stones of the *nkanye* are also much appreciated; they are very oleaginous and a modicum of oil may be obtained by merely squeezing them between the fingers! They are called *ngo*, and the saying is that they are food for kings, for the stone is very hard, the kernels very small and it is hard work to obtain even a small quantity! Not that there is any lack of stones! Heaps, which have been thrown away at the time of the famous *bukanye* brewing, are to be found in the vicinity of all villages, but the cracking is the difficulty. For this a stone must be sought, far and wide, and small hollows must be made in it of size to fit the circular *nkanye* stones; these are then inserted in the sockets and cracked by a sharp skilful blow with another stone,

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222 great care being taken to avoid crushing the small tender kernel,
 252 the royal delicacy ! In times of famine the *mongo* is in great request, in spite of the trouble involved in obtaining it.

222 Another very valuable tree is the *nkuhlu* (mu-mi) (*Trichilia*
 439 *emetica* L. p. 395) whose nuts are the *tihuhlu* (yin-tin) (1) the *matureira*. This is a curious fruit, the nut itself being of a greenish black colour, bitter and very oily ; on this grows white pulp (*bululu*), covered with a beautiful skin of a bright orange, which, however, only covers about three quarters of the central black nut. The Natives pick this fruit in November and December, and stuff their cheeks with it ; the saliva softens the pulp, which melts gradually in the mouth, affording them a prolonged enjoyment of its exquisite flavour. One sees children, and also folks of mature age, with their cheeks puffed out as if they were badly swollen and throats contracted with the effort of sucking down the delicious pulp ; when nothing remains but the black nut which is called *nkampfi*, viz., the product of suction, it is carefully put aside and will be used for making vegetable fat ; or it will be sold to the Whites, who export them to Marseilles where, it appears, they are used for making really good oil. Let us hope these nuts, thus sucked clean by the Blacks, have never supplied any portion of our salad dressing ! But there is no occasion to be alarmed, as they are only used for making machine oil. The Blacks themselves do not use the *tihuhlu* oil for culinary purposes but for outward application only.

252 The *bululu* can also be made into an edible fat by the following
 303 process : whole fruits of *nkuhlu* are first dried, then softened in water ; when quite soft, they are pressed between the fingers so as to separate the white pulp, which is then called *munyantsi*, from the black nuts (*nkampfi*). This *munyantsi* is cooked and the fat is skimmed off (*wungula*) with spoons as it melts and comes to the surface. This edible fat, as well as that used for smearing the body, is preserved either in calabashes or in sala shells (*shikutja*). The preparation of *nkampfi* fat takes place as

(1) A certain number of fruits instead of belonging to the *dji-na* class, as is the rule, are incorporated with the *yin-tin* class, the *tihuhlu*, the *tihlu* (fruit of the *muhlu* tree), the *tindjole* (fruit of the *ndjole*), etc.

follows: the nuts are thoroughly dried (*womisa*), and slightly
pounded in a mortar so as to remove the thin peel which covers
them; they are then winnowed, and ground into a kind of flour;
this flour is put into a pot with a little water and cooked; the fat is
then collected in a big shell of *Achatina* and kept for external use.
The residue is called *bubindje*. 252
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I do not mention all the other fruits, more or less succulent,
which serve the Natives for food. One must be terribly famished
to enjoy them. I may just specify the *pfilu* (*dji-ma*), *Vangueria*
infausta, a kind of insipid medlar; the *tjhopfa* (*dji-ma*), fruit of the
ntjhopfa tree, which I could never muster courage enough to taste,
and the *bungu* (*dji-ma*) sometimes dignified with the title of the
Kafir orange. This latter is the fruit of one of the varieties of the
rubia-rubber tree, which grows along the shores of Delagoa Bay.
(*Landolphia Kirkii*.) In the Morakwen forest grow the *ntjhole*
shrubs from which the *tintjole* berries are picked during the
summer. 137
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The *muhlu* or water tree bears a berry called *tihlu*, which has
an agreeable taste. The *mphimbi* bears the *mahimbi*, a large round
fruit similar in form to an apricot with a double stone. Both
these fruits are used to prepare a drink, and we shall mention them
when treating of Thonga drinks.

There are a few taboos to mention in connection with trees. 782
It is considered dangerous to cut the trunk of any large tree.
Should you wish to make a mortar of a *nkanye*, first smear some
of the bark with certain drugs and also burn them at the foot of the
tree before cutting it down. Should you want to cut down
a *nkwenga* or a mahogany-tree, *nhlapfuta* (Ro.), *shene* (Dj.),
to make a canoe, the master of the forest must first offer a sacrifice
to the spirits of his ancestors who have been buried there. If you
omit this precaution, you will be unable to find again the tree you
have chosen. 824

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out of the earth with their well filled double pods attached to their extremities.

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The men then construct *drying floors* (tjala, dji-ma) : a mat made of reeds, or of the wood of the palm-tree, is placed in the middle of the field, and supported by four poles ; and on it are



The storehouses of Sokis (Rikala).

Phot. H. A. Junod.

laid (yaneka) ground-nuts, and peas, to remain there exposed to the sun until they are completely dried.

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The next operation is the *threshing*, or separating the grain from the ears (hula). This is done with sorghum and Kafir corn, but not with maize, of which the cobs are generally kept entire in the storehouse until wanted. The *hula* is done on a specially prepared threshing floor in the middle of the field. The floor has been hardened by means of nkanye stones, and smeared over with clay. The sorghum and corn stems are brought thither, and the ears are beaten with small sticks. Or the ears are cut, placed in mortars and slightly pounded to liberate the grains. The best have been preserved for seed.

- 263 small amount of salt it contains! This is a long process attended
 317 with very unsatisfactory results. During the Anglo-Boer war,
 258 Natives round Leydsdorp reverted to it as all the stores were
 closed and no salt was procurable.



Salt manufacture, Northern Transvaal.

Phot. P. Rouet.

Nowadays Native manufacture of salt has entirely ceased. The beautiful glistening white article has advantageously replaced the greyish, blackish mixture of former times.

II. Food.

- 252 It is not an exaggeration to speak of a culinary art amongst
 581 the Thongas. They give great attention to cooking. Of a
 woman who knows how to cook well, it is said: "Awa hisa"
 "she burns;" not that she lets the sauce burn, but this expression
 corresponds to the French "cordon bleu." A girl who "hisa"
 will have more chance of being "lobola" than another.
- 252 This importance given to cooking explains the great richness of
 192 the culinary vocabulary. Every variety of dish or of culinary
 process has its particular name, and to master all these terms

a special apprenticeship ought to be served to one of the queens of the kitchen. I cannot boast of having gone as far as that!

As a rule women cook only once a day, towards the end of the afternoon. The big meal is eaten in the evening when everybody is expected to eat till satisfied (*shura*), and what remains of it is generally finished the next day in the morning (*fihlula*). This evening meal consists of two component parts: the cooked cereals, and the sauces seasoning them. But the menu can be greatly varied. In most cases the cereals are prepared as *bupsa* (flour), or *mcpa*, and the sauce, *murū* (Ro.), *sheshebo* (Dj.), is made of monkey nuts, ground and boiled in water, vegetables, India-pepper, tomatoes, shrimps, etc. Or the cereals, maize, millet or sorghum, may be only husked (*tlhokola*) and cooked whole; they are then called *tihohe* (plur. of *hobe*, the central part of the grain), and the monkey nut sauce is often replaced by beans or peas cooked together with the *tihohe*. All these dishes are very tasty and many White people readily eat the Thonga food, which seems to me superior to the Sutho.

However, I never very much appreciated the *bupsa* which the Thongas consider superior to the *tihohe* and which takes a longer time to prepare. The grains must first be soaked for several hours in water (*lobeka*) to soften them; they are then crushed, the husks being carefully removed by the winnowing process (*hehera*) in the *lihlelo* basket, which is spasmodically shaken by sudden jerky movements; the interior of the grain is then pounded until it forms a very fine flour, as light as the best Australian flour; the small round particles remaining are called *buse*, and eaten as *tihohe*, as the *bupsa* must be perfectly homogeneous. When it boils in the pot, the cook stirs it the whole time with a stick provided at the bottom with small cross bars, two to three inches in length; she twirls the stick with her hands in the same way as a man lighting a fire with the wooden flint, and this operation prevents the flour from forming lumps. The *lobeka* process gives a somewhat nauseating taste to the *bupsa*; that is why Europeans do not care for it, but Natives like it precisely for that reason. The preparation of *tihohe* is not so complicated, as no preliminary softening is necessary. It is a somewhat coarse food which,

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- 262 however, answers admirably to the wants and capacities of the Native stomach! When the *bupsa* of the previous day has undergone too much fermentation during the night, it is given to
 [264] the dogs. A small supplementary meal is often cooked at midday : a plate of vegetables, for instance. Or, if the pangs of hunger are too keenly felt, a little *nfuma* meal (p. 17) is eaten with honey. Any addition of this kind to the ordinary every day fare is welcome!

There are a few other preparations made from cereals : the *mbila*, raw meal mixed with water, the *nilatu*, a lighter kind of maize flour used for invalids, the *shimhimbi* made of Kafir corn which is the special dish for women who are more or less fasting during the confinement period (I. p. 42).

Thongas also know how to cook by steaming. They put a large plate (*mbenga*, *mu-mi*) on top of the pot and hermetically seal it with ox dung. This prevents the steam from escaping. Dung is a thing by no means to be avoided in the culinary art. They look upon it as quite clean (1).

Men have now become accustomed to ordinary ground mealie meal (*mugayo*) which Europeans use extensively as porridge in South Africa. They eat it in the mines and in the schools ; but women do not touch it and think it vastly inferior to their own *bupsa*.

As regards the husks they are called *budangwana*, a word which may mean : "that which is eaten by the dogs." They are given to the dogs, the pigs, and the fowls.

We shall see in the next paragraph how milk and meat are dealt with.

III. Drink.

- 271 Natives are fond of the fresh clear water (*mati*) running in the spruits of the Transvaal, but they also make use of the

(1) I remember on one of the Transvaal roads, meeting two converts of a German colleague returning from an evangelisation tour. I offered them a piece of bread, for which they were very thankful and they moved on some distance to eat it by themselves. I was much struck to see them, after having said grace, pick up a large piece of dried ox dung which was lying there and place their bread upon it before eating : they evidently thought it was much cleaner than the bare ground!

rite may explain why sexual relations are prohibited during all important hunting and fishing operations. With their magic conception of Nature, Bantus do not separate the domain of man from the animal world ; human actions have their immediate effect amongst animals. So if men and women keep strict control over themselves, hippopotami, fish or elephants will not be so wild, and hunters will have more success!

Meat is either boiled (pseka), or roasted (wosha). When boiled, the broth is called *mur*, (Ro.) or *sheshebo*, (Dj.) the same name that is given to monkey nut sauce or any other seasoning. When roasted, it is either placed on the embers, or skewered on sticks (*lihanga*) and exposed to the heat of the fire.

The blood of animals (*bubendje*) is also eaten by most men. However, many fear it (*tshaba*), not on account of a yila, as if it were taboo, but rather from individual loathing. There are no special laws to be observed as regards bones. The meat of sacrifices, offered in the funeral rites, must be eaten *on the road*, not in the mortuary nor in the guests' villages, as we have already seen.

Meat is welcome, and eagerly sought after in time of famine (*ndlala*). Should the October rains fail, or the crops be destroyed by grasshoppers, as has been, alas, frequently the case since the first appearance of these pests in August 1894 (1), the Natives are bereft of every resource (2). They dig up all the edges of the

(1) Just at the commencement of the war between the Natives and the Portuguese, grasshoppers arrived in thick clouds in the district of Lourenço Marques. They had not been seen for a great number of years: old folk only recollected having seen them in bygone times. Since then the scourge has never entirely disappeared. The coincidence of their coming and the beginning of hostilities struck the Blacks very forcibly; they often said, at the sight of the grasshoppers: "They announce the armies of *Gungunya*."

(2) Here is a pretty couplet with reference to famine:

Nkondjo wa nhlengana shipopokwana ?

— Lombe ra ndlala a he ngume kuuhe !

The traces of the little antelope (*nhlengana*) (which one sees in the desert a long way from its lair) recall the year of famine, when one does not stay near home ; (one must go a long way to search for food). See also the several allusions to the year of famine in *Les Chants et Contes des Ba-Ronga*, p. 158, 160 et seq.